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**TWO COMMENCEMENT
ADDRESSES**

TWO COMMENCEMENT ADDRESSES

BY
HENRY CABOT LODGE



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ADDRESS
AT RADCLIFFE COLLEGE
COMMENCEMENT

ADDRESS
AT RADCLIFFE COLLEGE
COMMENCEMENT

JUNE 23, 1915

JUST a year ago, speaking as president of the Harvard alumni, I quoted Lowell's famous definition of a university as a place "where nothing useful is taught." I fear that this pregnant sentence would now be generally regarded as little more than an amusing paradox and that even here in Cambridge its wit and humor and deep underlying truth are somewhat dimmed. So I quote it once more because I would fain say a word in behalf of the "useless" things which were once the main if not the sole object of all university education but which have now been pushed aside and which in these enlightened days are treated with kindly contempt as little better than the harmless pleasures of lovers of futile learning.

More and more rigidly has the stern practical test of utility been applied to all university teaching. More and more has the question been asked in regard to every branch of learning, "What use will this be to a student when he or she goes out into the world and is called upon to deal with the business of life?" The first test and the simplest was how far the education of a university would aid its graduates in earning a living; in other words, the money test was applied. This, so far as it approached the precincts of the university at all, had hitherto been considered in connection with the work of the professional schools alone, but now the university has gone to the point of trying at least to teach its students directly how to make money in purely money-making pursuits with no trace of general or even of professional learning about them. This represents the extreme to which the utilitarian theory of the highest education has proceeded. But long before this point was reached the sciences had not only entered upon the field

in old times consecrated to the classics, as they are familiarly described, but had taken the lion's share of the domain. That there was good reason for some change every one must admit, nor can it be denied that the ancient and long-continued monopoly of Greek and Latin in the higher education had become, in a measure certainly, an anachronism. But it seems as if the pendulum had now swung too far in the new direction.

Men cannot live by bread alone nor, in the highest sense, can education be restricted to methods of money getting or be of the finest quality and temper if the "humanities," as they used to be pleasantly called, are wholly thrust aside and neglected. It was not by accident that the literature and learning of Rome and Greece bore uncontested sway for centuries in all the universities, old and new, of Western civilization. Consider for a moment the facts upon which the classical education so long rested in unquestioned supremacy. There was a strong and brilliant movement

as early as the twelfth century to scatter the darkness which had settled down upon Europe after the downfall of the Roman Empire and in which men had been groping about for eight hundred years. This movement did not then culminate, but it opened the way for what has ever since been known as the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the point at which modern history is said to begin. That period is not inaptly named a rebirth, for men felt indeed as if they had been born again when they drew up from the darkness and released from the prison of the palimpsests the manuscripts which brought them face to face with the history, the art, the literature, the thought and the civilization of Greece and Rome. But there was much more than this. That was the time when the human mind suddenly broke forth into light and freedom. Men began to question everything and knowledge started on a new career. They sought to establish the place of the earth in the universe and set out to discover the size, the shape and the motion

of the planet upon which they lived. The doors of science were flung open and inquiry entered in. The material conditions of life were once more considered after long neglect. The drainage, the water supply, the baths of ancient Rome began to suggest that it was, perhaps, unwise to discard them, as Greek art had been discarded, merely because they were the work of pagans, and the idea dawned that plague-ridden cities and filthy habits were not essential to eternal well-being, and that the salvation of the soul was not incompatible with wholesome bodies and with public health.

All these things and many others were but outward manifestations of the liberation of the human intellect which made that era forever memorable, and which was felt in a thousand ways. The world identified this liberation of the mind with the revival of learning, as it was called, which was in effect the discovery and rehabilitation of Greek and Roman literature and art. How far this bringing the classics again to

light, accompanied by the resurrection of long-buried statues, was the cause of the great intellectual movement of the Renaissance, and how far it was merely one result of the movement itself, we need not now inquire. That the revival of the classics was coincident with the Renaissance and had an enormous influence upon the thought of the time is beyond doubt. To classical learning, therefore, men felt themselves so deeply indebted that it took possession of all the seats of the higher education and was in fact the higher education itself. The classical writers became the touchstone by which men were tested not only intellectually but socially. The education of a gentleman meant that a man had at least been brought into the presence of the classics, even if he remembered nothing of the pages which had passed before his eyes. A man ignorant of the "humanities," the *literæ humaniores*, no matter what his other accomplishments, was considered hopelessly uneducated. The classics in fact became a fetish which led to

many absurdities among their devotees, like that which has required successive generations of English boys to write Latin verses. The verses thus composed in metres painfully acquired and quickly forgotten could never be otherwise than more or less bad, and the exercise was of no more value than teaching them to manufacture poems in Choctaw would have been. Whereas, if they had been taught by ear to speak Latin, even in the mediæval form, it would have been of value always and everywhere.

But in getting rid of absurdities let us beware of losing the substance. It is not well wholly to forget the vast debt which mankind owes to the recovery of the literature and art of Greece and Rome. It was by no means without reason that a classical was known and is still known as a liberal education. The mind of the Renaissance was liberalized by the study of the classics and what was true then is true now, for the classical education liberalizes in the only right way by making its beneficiaries re-

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spect genuine learning and knowledge of any sort wherever found, and no matter how far removed it may be from their own. There is no form of education which teaches this respect for the learning and acquirements of other men in any direction, as far as my experience goes, so surely as the classical.

It is also to be remembered that the knowledge of Greek and Latin is necessary not only in the learned professions but in at least two great subjects which I believe are admitted within the pale of the scientific domain — philology and anthropology. Neither of these is strictly utilitarian nor in any way pecuniarily profitable, but the language of man and his origin and life upon earth are thought not unworthy of scientific consideration. This, however, is only incidental. To judge rightly the importance heretofore given to the study of Greek and Latin as well as the reasons for not allowing them to remain in the cold shade of retirement, to which in recent years they have been relegated, we must

in justice consider what a knowledge of the classics necessarily implies. Without that knowledge any real mastery and thorough comprehension of modern languages and literature is, in the highest sense, impossible. In fact, Greek and Latin are the foundations of the literature of Western civilization. Is literature then to be pushed aside because it is not obviously utilitarian and practically valuable in science, in business, or in money making ?

Literature and art are the fine flowers of the highest civilization. As Shakespeare has it:

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme.

In literature are garnered up the thoughts which have moved the world and guided, all unseen, the history of man. Worth more than all the money ever piled up are the happiness, the delights, the help, which literature has brought to the children of men. A purely material existence, a wholly material civilization, are joyless, for it is only the things of beauty that are joys

have hushed their voices, no dream which has once been entertained by actual human minds, nothing about which they have ever been passionate, or expended time and zeal.

Here, perhaps, we may learn why it is that no man who has not come in contact at least, even if the contact was only that of a schoolboy, with those great literatures, and with that history through whose portals we must pass in order to reach the wonderful civilizations of Egypt and Asia Minor, would ever be called a scholar, using the word in its loosest sense, or a cultivated man in the world's acceptance of the phrase. Thus much power the now decried classics still retain, but it is easier to proceed by negatives in fixing their degree of importance than to give an exact definition of the educated man who is expected, at least, to know them by name. Mere classical erudition is now clearly inadequate; a knowledge, however superficial, of the humanities, which was once regarded as all-sufficient, will no longer serve. I will not attempt this task, but will content myself with quoting a definition which I

lately heard from one of the wisest, most learned and most widely accomplished men I have ever known. You will observe that it is only a limitation, a statement, if you please, of the irreducible minimum of cultivation. He said:

No one can be called a cultivated man who does not know, in addition to his own literature, Homer, Cervantes and the Arabian Nights, and comparatively few persons fulfil this condition.

These requirements may seem unusual and very limited. But we must consider their implications before we hastily dismiss them. Homer implies a knowledge of Greek, and therefore of Latin. Cervantes created the greatest single figure of literature outside the world of Shakespeare and surpassed by very few within it. Men first perceived the comic side of the adventures, the homely sayings of Sancho, the humorous contrast between the knight and the squire. But as the years have passed by we have come to see in Don Quixote one of the rare cosmic characters which touch all human kind. Dr. Johnson names Don Quixote as

one of the three books written by mere men which any reader ever wished were longer. The reason for this great compliment is not far to seek, for in *Don Quixote* we behold the aspirations of humanity with all their delusions and mistakes, their infinite pathos, their nobility and their tragic disappointments. But we are concerned, just now, with implications rather than the work itself. A knowledge of *Don Quixote* and Cervantes implies a knowledge of the Renaissance in Europe and of the conditions which brought to life and beauty the greatest work of Spanish genius.

The last requirement of my friend, the *Arabian Nights*, may seem odd. We are all brought up to think of them as fairy stories admirably suited to the entertainment of children. If, however, we examine the originals, not only expurgated but enormously curtailed for the benefit of the nursery, we find these rambling tales filled with poems and philosophical discussions. Just here, however, my friend has high authority with him. Gibbon says: "I soon tasted the

Arabian Nights — a book of all ages, since in my present maturity I can revolve, without contempt, that pleasant medley of Oriental manners and supernatural fictions.” As Thackeray once remarked: “There can be no gainsaying the sentence of that great judge. To have your name mentioned by Gibbon is like having it written on the Dome of St. Peter’s. Pilgrims from all the world admire and behold it.” To be versed in the Arabian Nights, thus approved by Gibbon, implies also some knowledge of the philosophy, the poetry and the manners of the East, opening in many directions, vistas over which we must not linger. I will only pause long enough to find my conclusion in one of these Oriental tales.

Although it is not included in the accepted canon of the “Thousand and One Nights,” perhaps the most famous and most familiar of the Arabian tales is the story of Aladdin. You all remember how, after he had built his palace and married his princess, the wicked magician came

along and persuaded Aladdin's wife to change the old lamp for a new one. As a child, being behind the scenes and knowing the properties of the old lamp, I used to think the poor princess a very silly woman. In later years I have seen reason to revise that judgment about the princess, and to find palliating explanations for her unhappy mistake. If we take the trouble to consider and reflect, we shall find much wisdom concealed in these fairy tales. The wicked magician was an astute person, with large knowledge of the world, and of both man and womankind. When he offered the new lamp for the old he appealed to two of the strongest of human emotions, the earnest desire we all have to get something for nothing, and the passion for novelty. He knew his princess, and he obtained the old, battered, rusty lamp. We need not follow the story further. In the end virtue triumphed, and vice was defeated, as ought to be the case in every good fairy story. But in the little transaction which I have just described, there is, I think, one of those

morals which the Arabian tale tellers were also fond of hiding here and there in their narratives. It is a very simple lesson, and teaches us that it is, perhaps, well to deliberate before we throw away an old lamp, for that very one may possess a magic which is not to be found in its new and glittering successor.

**ADDRESS
AT THE PRESENTATION OF
THE WIDENER MEMORIAL
LIBRARY**

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ADDRESS
AT THE PRESENTATION OF
THE WIDENER MEMORIAL LIBRARY
TO HARVARD UNIVERSITY

JUNE 24, 1915

THIS noble gift to learning comes to us with the shadow of a great sorrow resting upon it. Unbidden there rises in our minds the thought of Lycidas, with all the glory of youth about him, the victim of

. . . that fatal and perfidious bark
Built in th' eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,
That sank so low that sacred head of thine.

But with the march of the years, which have devoured past generations, and to which we too shall succumb, the shadow of grief will pass, while the great memorial will remain. It is a monument to a lover of books, and in what more gracious guise than this can a man's memory go down to a remote posterity? He is the benefactor and the exemplar of a great host, for within

that ample phrase all gather who have deep in their hearts the abiding love of books and literature. They meet there upon common ground and with a like loyalty, from the bibliomaniac with his measured leaves, to the *homo unius libri*; from the great collector with the spoils of the world-famous printers and binders spread around him, to the poor student, who appeals most to our hearts, with all the immortalities of genius enclosed in some battered, shilling volumes crowded together upon a few shabby shelves.

But the true lovers of books are a goodly company one and all. No one is excluded except he who heaps up volumes of large cost with no love in his heart but only a cold desire to gratify a whim of fashion, or those others who deal in the books of the past as if they were postage stamps or bric-a-brac, as if they were soulless, senseless things, who speculate in them, build up artificial prices for great authors and small alike, and make the articles in which they traffic mere subjects of greed while they

trade on the human weakness for the unique, even when the unique is destitute of any other value. Such as these last might well find a place among the enemies of books described by Mr. Blades. This commercialism which sees in books nothing but money, and prizes them solely by the fantastic heights to which the prices can be pushed in the auction room, whether the object be worthy or worthless, has of late not a little discredited one very beautiful and attractive side in the collection of books, the side which concerns the form rather than the contents, but which has nevertheless an enduring charm. Yet because we recoil from seeing a fortune paid for a mere specimen of printing, of slight intrinsic value and of no literary value at all in that precise form, it does not follow that we should therefore reject all gathering in of first editions as a trivial and uselessly expensive amusement.

No lover of books, to take the most salient example possible, can fail to long for the first folio as well as the quartos of

Shakespeare's plays. Besides the sentiment which any one, not wholly insensible, must feel, these most rare volumes are full of interest and instruction, for they tell us much of the greatest genius in literature. The first edition as a rule, although not in Shakespeare's case, brings with it the pleasant thought that just in this form and in no other did it come from the press to him who created it. There is a happy satisfaction, too, in knowing that we have in our hand the volume which some well-loved author has held in his, if only to write his name upon the fly-leaf, for in this way there vibrates across the dead years a delicate sense of personal contact with its appealing touch of human sympathy. Then, far beyond the reach of most of us, are the books of hours and devotion, so beautiful in their illuminations, and the marvels of the old binders, dear to us not only as examples of an artistic craft, but because they are charged with historical associations which go deeper and carry us further away from every-day life than all the fine-

drawn tracery of the master workman who wrought the manifold devices. Of these rarities and wonders in the world of books, these first editions, these specimens of a lovely and bygone art, these worn and shabby volumes with their priceless notes on the margin and their well-remembered names penned or pencilled upon the fly-leaves, there comes to us a collection which is the most intimate and personal part of this great gift. They speak to us most directly, as they will to succeeding generations, of the young lover of books so untimely taken, to whose memory this library, which encloses them, has been erected. The University is fortunate indeed when it receives at the same moment this stately building and such a collection of rare and precious volumes to grace its inner shrine.

But this library, where all the accumulations of the University will have a dwelling-place, has a significance which goes beyond that of which I have spoken. No other university and scarcely any state or nation possesses a library building so elaborately

arranged as this, so fitted with every device which science and ingenuity can invent for the use of books by scholars and students. This is preëminently a student's library. It is not forced, as the Library of Congress has been until very lately, to absorb two copies of every pamphlet and of every book which obtains a copyright, a vast torrent of the ephemeral and the valueless upon which *rari nantes in gurgite vasto*, are born the comparatively small number of books worthy of preservation. It is not bound by tradition, like the British Museum, to find house room for every printed thing which myriads of presses pour out upon a wearied world. No general public with its insatiable demand for what are so charmingly described as "Juveniles and Fiction" can compel it to purchase "best sellers," which flutter their brief hour in gaudy paper wrappers upon the news-stands and book-stalls, and then are seen no more. In a time when Job's supplication that his adversary would write a book has no longer any meaning, because not only all adver-

saries but all friends write books, the library of the university has the fine freedom which permits it to devote itself to only two kinds of books — the literature of knowledge and the literature of imagination.

Within the wide, far-stretching boundaries of the first much is included. We begin with the books of simple information, repositories of facts, like statistics, newspapers and official records, destitute of literary quality, but all-important as the material in which the investigator makes his discoveries and from which the thinker and the philosopher draw their deductions. The true literature of knowledge is very different. Its scope is vast, and we find within it all the sciences and all the arts, history, philosophy in every form, metaphysics and certain kinds of criticism. Literature here is the handmaid of knowledge; too often a very neglected, dim and attenuated handmaiden, but sometimes quite as important as the instruction which she brings with her to the minds of men. The scale ranges from a scientific work, per-

haps of high importance, in which words are treated merely as a necessary vehicle for the transmission of thought, to writings like those of Thucydides, Tacitus or Gibbon, which are monuments of literature even more than they are histories of man's doings upon earth. Indeed, as we approach the highest examples in the literature of knowledge, we are gradually merged in the achievements of pure literature.

When we read Plato we pass insensibly from the philosophy, the social and economic speculations to the realm of poetry, and few passages in all literature have greater beauty, are more imaginative than the famous description of the Cave or the dream of the lost Atlantis. Then there are the great autobiographies, like St. Augustine, Rousseau, Franklin, Pepys, Casanova and Benvenuto Cellini, which almost alone have succeeded in making men who have lived as real to us as those created by the poet or the novelist, and in addition there is that other autobiography called Lavengro, where we wander to and fro upon

the earth in happy uncertainty as to whether what we read is fact or fancy. Hovering in the debatable ground between the two great divisions of literature, we meet the essayists as they are inadequately called, as few in number as they are charming and attractive. Montaigne, La Bruyère, Addison, Charles Lamb and Dr. Holmes are there to greet us. Wit and wisdom, knowledge and reflection mingle with the creations of imagination and defy classification. We only know that we love them, these friends of the sleepless and the watchers, who will delight us for hours, and never be offended or less fascinating if we give them only scattered and unregarded minutes. By such pleasant paths as these we pass easily, smoothly, unconsciously almost, from the literature of knowledge to the literature of imagination, to the beautiful region where knowledge is not imposed upon us, but subtly conveyed, where facts are in truth wholly "unconcerning" and where literature in its finest sense is all in all.

Here one stops, hesitates, feels helpless. What profit is there in an effort to describe in minutes what we find in this vast, enchanted land, when lifetimes are all too short to tell its wonders? We cannot cover literature with a phrase or define it in a sentence. The passage in a great writer which comes nearest to doing this is one which I met for the first time nearly fifty years since. Twenty-five years ago I should have hesitated to quote it because it was familiar to every schoolboy. I hesitate to quote it now because I fear it will appeal only to elderly persons whose early education was misdirected. I must confess that it is written in one of the languages which are conventionally described as "dead," because convention has no sense of humor. Strangely enough it appears in a legal argument made in behalf of a Greek man of letters whose citizenship was contested, and no court in history has ever listened to a plea which was at once so noble in eloquence and so fine as literature. I am old-fashioned enough to think that it

possesses qualities far beyond the reach of any utilitarian touchstone and well worthy of fresh remembrance. The words I am about to quote have that combination of splendor and concision in which Latin surpasses all other tongues.

Thus then Cicero spoke in behalf of Archias, summoning books and libraries, literature and learning, to the support of his client:

Hæc studia adolescentiam alunt, senectutem oblectant, secundas res ornant, adversis perfugium ac solatium præbent, delectant domi, non impediunt foris, pernoctant nobiscum, peregrinantur, rusticantur.

How fine and full it is. Yet there is still, I think, something more.

Dr. Johnson, who is described by Boswell's uncle as "a robust genius born to grapple with whole libraries," and who said as many good things about literature as almost any one in history, asked once in his emphatic way, "What should books teach but the art of living?" This does not differ in essence from Matthew Arnold's famous dictum that poetry, the highest

form of literature must be a criticism of life. Both are admirable, both inadequate. When we enter the wide domain of the literature of imagination we find ourselves among the greatest minds which humanity has produced, so great, so different from all others that we are fain to give them a name we cannot define, and call them geniuses. There we are in the company of the poets, the makers, the singers. All are there from the author of the book of Job and the writers of the Psalms and the Song of Songs, onward to the glory that was Greece; onward still to Lucretius and Horace and Catullus and Virgil; onward still to him whom Virgil led, who covered all Italy with his hood; onward to the "chief of organic numbers," and still onward to the poets of the last century and of our own time, for although poetry waxes and wanes it can never pass wholly away. There, too, we find the great poets who were also dramatists, who created the men and women who never lived and will never die, whom we know better than any men or women of

history who once had their troubles here upon earth. There we meet and know so well Hector and Achilles, Helen and Andromache upon the plains of Troy, where, alas! men are fighting savagely today. We wander over the wine-dark sea with Ulysses and listen to some of the greatest stories ever written.

We come down the ages and find ourselves in the time of Shakespeare, of whom it may be said as the great Roman critic said of Menander, "Omnem vitæ imaginem expressit," and then we can go forth in the company of Cervantes' knight and squire, with the humor and sadness, the laughter and tears of humanity travelling with them. Nearly two centuries more go by and we are in the company of Faust, tasting the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, touching the whole of humanity in its lusts, its passions and its weaknesses, and if well-breathed we can journey on into the realm of speculation and philosophy and mysticism, and gaze once more upon

The face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium.

So we come to the era of the novelists and there are made free of another world of people among whom we find the friends and companions of our lives. They are always with us, ready at our call, and we can never lose them.

These are some of the aspects, some of the inevitable suggestions of a library, of a great collection of books. In this place, in this spacious building, they offer one of the best assurances a university can have of strength and fame and numbers, for a great library draws men and women in search of education as a garden of flowers draws the bees. Carlyle indeed went even further when he said, "The true university of these days is a collection of books." Such a library as this is not only a pillar of support to learning but it is a university in itself.

I have spoken of it thus far as it appears here in its primary capacity, in its first great function as a student's library, to which not only students old and young will come, but to which the historian and the

man of science, the scholar, the teacher and the professor, the poet, the novelist and the philosopher will repair. A splendid service this to render to mankind. But there is still something more, an attribute of the library which is as wide as humanity, for books are the records of all that we know of human deeds and thoughts, of the failures, the successes, the hopes, the aspirations of mankind. "Books," said Dr. Johnson, "help us to enjoy life or teach us to endure it."

Here, as to all great collections of books, as to all books anywhere which have meaning and quality, come those who never write, who have no songs to sing, no theories with which they hope to move or enlighten the world, men and women who love knowledge and literature for their own sakes and are content. Here those who toil, those who are weary and heavy-laden come for rest. Here among the books we can pass out of this work-a-day world, never more tormented, more in anguish than now, and find, for a brief hour at least, happi-

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ness, perchance consolation, certainly another world and a blessed forgetfulness of the din and the sorrows which surround us. Here, for the asking, the greatest geniuses will speak to us and we can rise into a purer atmosphere and become close neighbors to the stars. As an English poet writes of Shakespeare in these troubled days:

O, let me leave the plains behind,
And let me leave the vales below!
Into the highlands of the mind,
Into the mountains let me go.

Here are the heights, crest beyond crest,
With Himalayan dews impearled;
And I will watch from Everest
The long heave of the surging world.

It is a great, a noble gift, which brings us all this in such ample measure and lays it at the feet of our beloved University. The gratitude of all who love Harvard, of all who love books, goes out from their hearts unstinted to the giver.

They mean so much, these books, so much more than I in these halting sentences have been able to express. For

there is to books a human side inherent in the silent leaves which even Cicero omitted and which Dr. Johnson and Matthew Arnold wholly passed by. We find that single thought in the mind of Whitman, when he wrote of a book:

Camarado, this is no book,
Who touches this touches a man,
(Is it night? Are we here together alone?)
It is I you hold and who holds you,
I spring from the pages into your arms — de-
cease calls me forth.

Rightly considered in this aspect, the books mean so much now, just now, when freedom of speech, and freedom of thought, when liberty and democracy are in jeopardy every hour, that I must turn at last if I would find fit utterance to the great champion of all these things, and repeat to you the famous sentences of Milton:

For books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive as those fabulous Dragon's teeth; and being

sown up and down may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness is used as good almost kill a man as kill a good book; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.

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